# Most Notable Members of the Lotos Club from the Late 1800s to 1948

The Lotos Club, founded in 1870, assembled one of the most distinguished memberships in American literary and cultural society during its first eight decades. This elite circle included writers, publishers, politicians, industrialists, and cultural figures who shaped American intellectual life from the Gilded Age through the immediate post-World War II period.

## Founding Members and Early Leadership (1870s-1880s)

The club's founding circle established its intellectual foundation and cultural prominence. **DeWitt Van Buren**, editor of the New York Leader, served as the club's first president until his death in October 1870[1]. His successor, **A. Oakey Hall**, New York City's mayor who became embroiled in the Boss Tweed scandal, represented the club's early political connections[2] [3].

**John Brougham**, the renowned Irish-American dramatist and actor, served as the club's first vice president and later became president[2] [4] [5]. Brougham's theatrical expertise helped establish the club's emphasis on dramatic arts and entertainment[6].

Other founding officers included **Frederick A. Schwab** (Vice President), **George W. Hows** (Secretary), and **Albert Weber** (Treasurer), along with directors **Montgomery Schuyler**, **Thomas A. Kennett**, **William L. Alden**, **J.H. Eliot**, and **Harold W. Bateman**[1].

## Literary Giants and Publishers

**Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens)** remains the club's most famous early member, joining shortly after its founding in 1873[7] [8]. He famously dubbed the Lotos Club "The Ace of Clubs" and maintained lifelong membership, frequently attending dinners and delivering memorable speeches[9] [10].

**Whitelaw Reid**, editor and owner of the New York Tribune, served as club president for fourteen years and was instrumental in establishing the club's tradition of hosting distinguished guests[2] [11] [12]. Under his leadership, the club began its famous State Dinners in 1872[8].

**John Hay**, author and secretary to Abraham Lincoln, represented the club's connection to both literature and politics[2] [11] [8]. His membership bridged the Civil War era with the club's literary mission.

**Henry Watterson**, the influential newspaper editor from Kentucky, brought Southern perspectives to the club's predominantly Northern membership[2] [11] [13].

## Theater and Performing Arts

The club maintained strong connections to American theater through several prominent members. **Edwin Booth**, the greatest Shakespearean actor of his generation and brother of Lincoln's assassin, held membership in both the Lotos Club and founded The Players club[2] [8] [14].

**Joseph Jefferson**, famous for his portrayal of Rip Van Winkle, was an active member who participated in club events and dinners[2] [8] [15] [16].

## Industrial Magnates and Philanthropists

**Andrew Carnegie**, the steel magnate and philanthropist, not only held membership but became the club's financial savior during the 1907 panic[17] [18] [19]. Carnegie provided crucial funding that enabled the club to complete its new building at 110 West 57th Street, demonstrating his commitment to the institution[17] [20].

**Solomon R. Guggenheim**, the mining magnate and art collector who founded the Guggenheim Museum, was a prominent member[21] [22] [23] [24]. His membership reflected the club's attraction to both wealthy patrons and serious art collectors.

**Walter P. Chrysler Jr.**, heir to the automotive fortune, represented the club's appeal to industrial families and art patrons[21] [25] [26].

## Long-Serving Presidents

**Frank R. Lawrence** served as the club's president for twenty-nine consecutive terms from 1889 until his death in 1918[27] [28] [29]. Lawrence's long tenure provided stability and continuity during the club's most prosperous period, overseeing its move to multiple locations and the establishment of its traditions.

**Chester S. Lord**, newspaper editor and publisher, succeeded Lawrence as president from 1918 to 1923[30]. Lord helped organize the club's speech collections and contributed to its literary documentation.

**Nicholas Murray Butler**, president of Columbia University and Nobel Peace Prize winner, served as club president beginning in 1923[3] [31]. Butler's academic credentials elevated the club's intellectual standing.

## Writers and Critics

**Thomas Bailey Aldrich**, editor of The Atlantic Monthly and author of "The Story of a Bad Boy," was an active member who participated in club dinners honoring other literary figures[32] [33] [34].

**Edmund Clarence Stedman**, poet, critic, and Wall Street banker, exemplified the club's blend of literary and business interests[34] [35] [36]. His membership demonstrated how the club attracted professionals who pursued both commercial success and artistic achievement.

**Richard Watson Gilder**, editor of The Century Magazine, was a regular participant in club events and helped maintain its literary standards[37] [38] [34] [39].

**William Dean Howells**, "the Dean of American Letters," held membership and participated in notable club dinners, including the famous 1893 dinner honoring Mark Twain[34] [40].

**Bret Harte**, the Western writer famous for "The Luck of Roaring Camp," was connected to the club's literary circle, though his California residence limited his active participation[41].

### Publishers and Media Leaders

**Arthur Hays Sulzberger**, publisher of The New York Times from 1935 to 1961, represented the club's continued attraction to major media figures[21] [42] [43].

The club consistently attracted newspaper publishers, magazine editors, and other media leaders who shaped American public opinion during this crucial period of national development.

### International Recognition

The club's prestige attracted international attention, with **Arthur Conan Doyle** being honored at a memorable dinner in 1894 during his first American tour[44] [45] [46]. This event, featuring the creator of Sherlock Holmes, demonstrated the club's role as an unofficial cultural embassy for visiting British and other foreign dignitaries.

### Membership Characteristics

Throughout this period, the club maintained its founding principle that at least half of its members should be from literary, artistic, journalistic, or theatrical professions[47]. This constitutional requirement ensured that businessmen and industrialists, while welcome as patrons, could not dominate the club's cultural mission.

The club's membership during this era represented the apex of American cultural achievement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These men shaped American literature, journalism, theater, industry, and politics during a period of unprecedented national growth and cultural development. Their collective presence at the Lotos Club created an intellectual atmosphere that Mark Twain appropriately recognized as the "Ace of Clubs" - a gathering place for America's most accomplished citizens.

From its founding in 1870 through 1948, the Lotos Club served as a crucial meeting ground where literary giants, industrial leaders, newspaper publishers, and cultural figures could gather in an atmosphere of "rest and harmony," fulfilling Alfred Lord Tennyson's poetic vision that inspired the club's name and mission.

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